Willamette National Forest Pilot Road Analysis

Appendix H

Recreation Process Paper

October 1998

Recreation

The first section pertains to the following Key Questions in the "Recreation" part of the analysis:

1. ***Is there now or will there be excess supply or excess demand for unroaded recreation opportunity now or in the future?***
2. ***Does road access contribute to use in excess of the capacity of Wild and Scenic Rivers?***
3. ***Does road access (number of roads and road condition) contribute to overcrowding and/or resource damage at popular back-country destinations (Wild and Scenic Rivers)?***
4. ***What is the level and condition of access to Special Interest Areas and Old Growth Groves?***

The second section will deal with the questions in the context of Dispersed Recreation, Scenic Byways and Developed Recreation.

The final section will address the same questions in the context of Trails and Wilderness.

Background

Citing the Willamette NF LRMP/EIS, the Forest offers a diversity of recreation settings ranging from developed recreation to Wilderness. The primary purpose of managing recreation resources is to provide a range of opportunities from which National Forest users can obtain satisfying recreation experience. We seek to identify recreation settings of varying characteristics that range from large, remote undeveloped areas to small, easily accessed highly developed sites.

Maintaining a viable road system is the key to our ability to provide the diverse recreation settings necessary to meet our desired condition. At the same time, the existence of roads and/or the condition of roads may contribute to overuse, and ultimately a diminishment of visitors' recreation experiences. Public needs may change over time, and we should be willing to adjust and make needed changes.

Process Description/Documentation

1. ***Is there now or will there be excess supply or excess demand for unroaded recreation opportunities?***

According the Forest LRMP/EIS (III-105): "Uses which depend upon a semiprimitive setting face a decreasing supply of opportunities as lands are converted from an unroaded state. Unroaded areas which undergo intensive timer harvesting and accompanying road construction will lose those attributes that provide the solitude and undisturbed environment associated with semiprimitive recreation experiences".

"Semiprimitive non-motorized" settings are characterized by a high probability of solitude, natural appearance, low interaction between users, evidence of vegetation modification is low.

The Forest Plan goes on to predict that recreation use in the semiprimitive unroaded segment of the Forest will exceed the practical capacity for that setting sometime between 2010 and 2040.

We have no better data than this to help with the Roads Analysis. Year-to-year data from wilderness permits, trailhead registers, automatic road counters, would all contribute to our understanding of trends of use. We have no integrated methodology to do a comprehensive analysis of use trends.

2. Does road access contribute to use in excess of the capacity of Wild and Scenic Rivers?

The Forest has two congressionally designated Wild and Scenic Rivers: North Fork of the Middle Fork Willamette, and Upper McKenzie. The Forest also has one congressional Study River: South Fork McKenzie. In the Forest LRMP, we identified nine river segments that have river-related values that meet criteria to be eligible for Wild and Scenic River status: Little North Santiam, Opal Creek, Breitenbush, South Fork Breitenbush, North Santiam, Quartzville Creek, Middle Santiam, South Santiam, and Middle Fork Willamette.

For the streams that have classifications of "Recreation", roads and other developments are permitted. Most of the streams listed above have an arterial or collector road within the corridor boundary. Those roads are likely to be considered essential for recreation.

In order to answer this question, a Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) process would have to be used to determine the current level of use for each of the streams, develop thresholds for levels of use, and ultimately develop standards for what constitutes acceptable change over time. None of the eligible or designated rivers have undertaken an LAC process for road-related recreation use. Initiation of such a process would best be done at a District level.

3. Does road access (number of roads and road condition) contribute to overcrowding and/or resource damage on Wild and Scenic Rivers.

This question is similar to #1 in that most of the designated or eligible rivers are served by arterials or collector roads. Recreation use, especially during the summer will be moderate to high in river corridors.

Local roads that disperse use into river corridors may have an effect on vegetation, soil, and may ultimately contribute to erosion. River Management Plans for the two designated Wild and Scenic Rivers identified the need to close certain local roads, and both Districts have followed through on that direction. For the eligible rivers, some local roads or non-system roads have been closed over time.

This question is best answered by Districts through Watershed Analyses or through a LAC process to determine thresholds and standards for change.

4. What is the level and condition of access to Special Interest Areas and Old Growth Groves?

The Forest identified 44 new Special Interest Areas in the Forest LRMP/EIS to preserve special cultural, historic, geologic, zoologic, botanic and scenic qualities of the Forest. Management actions are to focus on protection of the important historic, cultural and natural aspects, and where appropriate, foster public use, study and enjoyment of designated lands.

Use will be managed to the extent necessary to protect the unusual features of individual sites. Area Management Guides are to be prepared for each area.

In addition to the aforementioned SIAs, 34 Old Growth Groves were designated in the LRMP for education, use and enjoyment of the public. Area guides are to be prepared for each Grove.

Many of the SIAs and Groves are served by arterials or collectors; some are not accessed by roads at all.

There are no known use or access issues at the Forest level. The evaluation of this question is best done at the District level during the Area Plan or Watershed Analysis processes.

Results and Interpretation

In general for the questions I answered (Wild and Scenic Rivers, SIAs and Old Growth Groves), there are no "hot spots" that should be addressed at the Forest level during this analysis. There may be opportunities, however, to look at the number of local roads within Wild and Scenic River corridors and/or leading to SIAs or Old Growth Groves if they are concurrently identified as contributors to the decline of other resources (fish, wildlife, water quality, etc).

Dispersed Recreation/Scenic Byways/Developed Recreation

Process Description/Documentation

2. What is the level and condition of access to developed recreation sites?

3. How and where does the existing road system influence recreation areas?

The majority of the developed recreation sites on the Willamette National Forest are accessible via double lane asphalt paved roads. Several sites are located on double lane all weather gravel roads. Access to developed sites is not difficult. All of the Developed Recreation Sites have water and require a fee to camp. Most sites have a ROS (Recreation Opportunity Spectrum) classification of "Roaded Modified", two are classified as "Roaded Natural"., and non are classified as "Semi-Primitive Motorized. A mix of a few more sites in Roaded Natural and Semi-Primitive Natural would provide a greater breadth of recreation experiences for the public. The ROS classification is determined in a great part by the difficulty of vehicular access to the recreation site. The existing road system provides very adequate access to all recreation areas, developed and dispersed.

- ***Key Question:*** *Does road access contribute to use in excess of the capacity of recreation facilities?:*

Detroit Ranger District is located just south of Portland, Oregon, and east of Salem, Oregon. Because of the proximity of a large body of water to the greater portion of the population of the state, Detroit Reservoir is the second highest used reservoir in the State of Oregon. On summer weekends and holidays, recreationists flock to the Detroit Reservoir area, occupying all recreation sites available. When the developed campgrounds become full, use of most or all dispersed recreation sites occurs. Detroit Reservoir is located on State Highway 22, which is a major east west travel route. It is debatable as to whether the road system contributes to overuse of this area or if it is the closeness to the metropolitan population of the state that contributes the most to overuse. It is probably a combination of both.

Overuse is not a constant issue on the rest of the forest, although it does occur at some sites on major holidays and weekends. Labor Day weekend in the McKenzie River drainage, along Fall Creek, and in the Sweethome district, at Big Lake, and at Waldo Lake usually begins with recreationist arriving as early as the prior Tuesday. The road system does provide easy access to all of these areas, but does not contribute adversely to exceeded capacity.

4. How do roads contribute to the use of dispersed recreation sites?

Dispersed Recreation Sites are directly related to road access. People using dispersed recreation sites in the summer are recreationists, and in the fall are hunters. Usually the recreationists and hunters do not use the same sites. Many dispersed sites are located on user made roads or jeep trails, which on the Willamaette are usually less than 1.000 feet. Access to the user made roads is by both asphalt and gravel roads.

5. How and where does the current road system meet motorized, driving for pleasure recreation demands?

- ***Key Question:*** *Where are Scenic Byways, Back Country Byways, and other designated recreation-related travel routes?*

Driving for pleasure is the primary uses of the main forest road system on the Willamette National Forest. Driving for pleasure also occurs on the US Highways , and the State of Oregon Highways, but is not necessarily the main use.

A National (Federal Highway Designated) Scenic Byway exists. The Mckenzie Pass-Santiam Pass Scenic Byway goes From the town of McKenzie Bridge, Oregon, to Sisters, Oregon following the historic State Route 242, and returns via US highway 20, and State Highway 126. Some visitor facilities, ie. restrooms, interpretive signs, parking, and trails have been added to this scenic byway. Since it's designation as a scenic byway , use has increased steadily. Some improvements as mentioned above are being constructed presently.

The West Cascades Scenic Byway, a State of Oregon designated scenic byway begins in Estacada, Oregon, near Portland, and terminates in Oakridge, Oregon. This scenic byway is located on US Highways, State Highways, and Forest Highways on the west slopes of the Cascade Mountain Range.. It provides an alternate route to Interstate 5 for recreationists. Because of the more recent designation of this Byway, a very few number of improvements have been constructed. Plans are underway for five portals to be constructed and interpretive planning documents are being prepared.

Diamond Drive follows forest road 21 from the city of Oakridge south along the Middle Fork of the Willamette River and on to Lomolo Lake and the Rogue River-Umpqua Scenic Byway. Diamond drive was intended to be a part of the West Cascades Scenic Byway, but a 16 mile portion of the road is not asphalt paved, and therefore not eligible for inclusion in the State of Oregon Scenic Byway System. If and when the 16 miles had double lanes and is paved it could be added to the state system. Then there would be a scenic byway system from Portland, Oregon to Medford, Oregon.

A BLM / US Forest Service Back Country Drive begins at State Highway 20 and the Quartsville Road at the east end of Foster Reservoir. It ends at State Highway 22 and the Straight Creek road intersection. Kiosks have been constructed near both ends of the Back Country Drive.

Trails and Wilderness

Background

As with Recreation sites, the maintenance of a viable road system is a key to providing the diverse opportunities available on the Willamette National Forest, where there are 236 trailheads servicing 1779 miles of both non wilderness and wilderness trail.

Process Description/Documentation

1. ***What is the level and condition of access to trailheads? Does road access contribute to use in excess of the capacity of recreation facilities?***

   There is a similar situation here as with other recreation sites, roading is adequate for the current needs of the public demand for access, but during the next 40 years demand will exceed ability to respond with additional miles of trail and related trailheads.

2. ***Does the number of roads and/or their condition influence use patterns and quantities to backcountry destinations: Does access contribute to overcrowding and/or resource damage at popular backcountry trailheads?***

   Use patterns and numbers of users to backcountry destinations tend to be more dispersed by increased numbers of trailheads as well as miles of trails. This will, however, have an adverse effect on wildlife and increased cost to maintain road access to the trailheads.

3. ***How and where does the existing road system influence trailheads?***

   Trailheads are for the most part served by collector roads, with a few being on main arterials and a few on secondary roads.

4. ***How and where does the current road system meet motorized, driving for pleasure recreation demands? What opportunities exist for converting closed roads to ATV trails?***

   Opportunities such as this have not been explored at this time. As this process is ongoing, all opportunities for these conversions will be reviewed .

Results and Interpretation

This process brings to point the lack of data available on use figures for trailheads, and types and needs of users. A forest wide trailhead map was generated on GIS, several trailheads fell into areas that are considered hotspots in regards to other resources. Focus should be placed on these trailhead first for analysis as to whether or not they are in the best location for visitor needs with emphasis on resource protection. A list of these trailheads, by INFRA number are as follows:

6th Field Subwatershed Number	INFRA Trailhead Number
In/or access thru **236** & **234**	72109-72110, 72118-72122, 72127-72129
In **221**	72103
In **213**	72105-72107
In **191**	72551, 72548, 72557, 72560-564 72566, 72570, 72573, 72574, 72576, 72579, 72582, 72585

Trailheads affected by other concerns to a lesser degree are:

6th Field Subwatershed Number	INFRA Trailhead Number
In **073**	72688 and 72687
In **061**	73907, 73921, 73916, 73927
In **067**	73908
In **054**	73910, 73906 and 73904